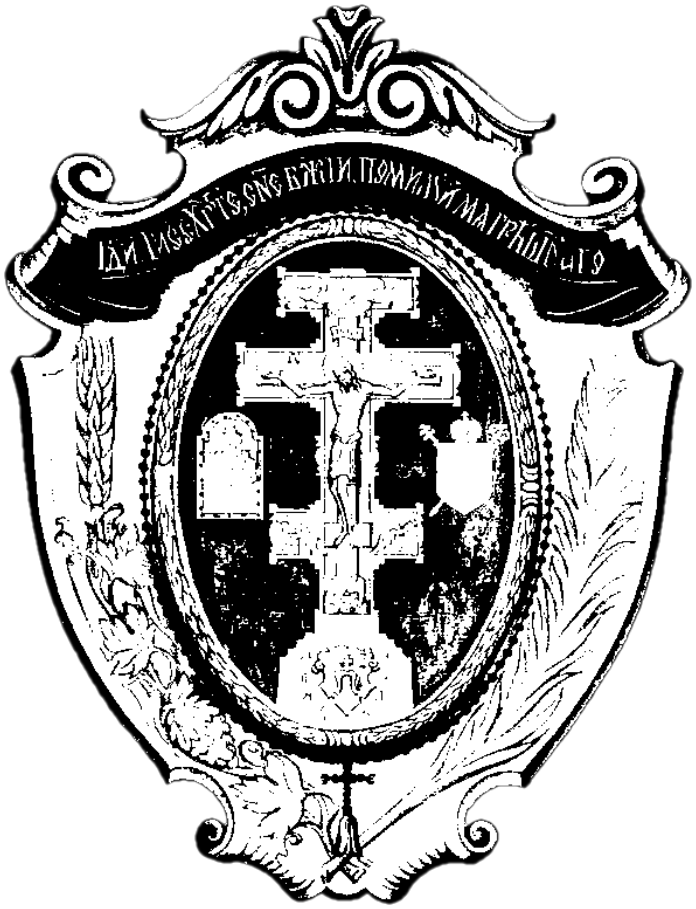
Do Not Be Afraid, Only Believe

(The Life and Ministry of the Hieromonk of the Studite Rule

Volodymyr Vasyl Voronovskyi)



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INTRODUCTORY WORD

Our Divine Savior gave His apostles the mandate to heal every disease and infirmity and the authority to cast out evil spirits (cf. Mt 10:1). Today this authority is passed on by the successors of the apostles—the bishops—to certain priests whom we call exorcists. When speaking of Ukraine, one of the most well-known exorcists in our Church is the Studite priest, Father Vasyl Voronovskyi.

I have known Father Vasyl as a simple, approachable, and deeply believing person since the 1980s, when God granted me—the Ukrainian, originally from Yugoslavia—the grace to visit the Ukrainian land for the first time, the land where my father was born.

In the hospitable quarters of the underground Greek Catholics in Lviv, I encountered among numerous bishops and other clergy a modest priest, an ordinary worker of the sanitary-epidemiological station, who spoke little and smiled constantly. He carried with him a large leather bag full of poison with which he exterminated rats.

At the same time—and no one suspected this—he also carried with him a small bottle of holy water, a homemade prayer book for reading prayers over the sick, and the Most Holy Mysteries, with which he strengthened in spirit those who were turning to God. From the very first glance it was evident that he was a self-sacrificing and courageous priest who would yet accomplish

much good for our Church and people, despite being watched at every step.

When I visited Lviv a second time in the autumn of 1986 and again had the opportunity to meet Father Vasyl, he confided to me in a whisper that his younger brother—Hieromonk Yulian of the Studite Rule—had recently been consecrated a bishop. I remember assuring him that I would keep this as the secret of sacramental confession. This joyful news, however, soon became known to all after our Church emerged from the underground at the end of 1989.

From the time I arrived for permanent ministry in Ukraine, our cooperation with Father Vasyl in the spiritual field became more active. We often went on missions together, in particular in the cities of Horodok and Chervonohrad, the urban-type settlement of Komarno, the village of Stoianiv in the Sokal region, and elsewhere.

Many times I visited him as a patient in the hospital, and I was struck by the fact that he did not cease helping sick people who stood in long lines before him to regain the health of body and soul. Although doctors forbade him to rise from his bed, he prayed for hours over the sick, and when he was cautioned that this was dangerous for his health, he replied: "I pray for the health of others, and God will strengthen my health."

His diligence is admirable, and despite his weakened state of health and his no longer young age, he is always present where he is needed, especially at prayer vigils and supplications on the occasion of religious and national feasts. More than once he visited the capital of Ukraine, Kyiv, where during missions in the Church of St. Nicholas on Askold's Grave he celebrated various liturgical services and read prayers for healing and exorcisms over a large number of faithful of different confessions.

Father Vasyl prays continually, especially while traveling, for all those who have entrusted themselves to his prayer. His selfless service to God and to people, as well as his unconditional fidelity and obedience to the Holy Church, are deeply impressive.

During the most difficult times of the underground period, he traveled throughout the whole of Ukraine, preaching the word of God to the people and administering the Holy Mysteries. Now he is no longer able to visit everyone, but we hope that through this little book his spirit of prayer will become present throughout Ukraine and even beyond its borders. We wish to believe that it will bring great spiritual benefit and consolation to all Christians.

The basis of the book *"Do Not Be Afraid, Only Believe"* is a comprehensive interview which Father Vasyl gave to the editors. We thank Father Vasyl for agreeing to the publication of this edition and for permitting the use of archival photographs in it.

In addition to the aforementioned interview with Father Vasyl, the booklet makes use of certain materials published in various periodicals, and it also includes prayers for various needs.

The book is addressed to a wide circle of readers, above all to believing people, in particular the sick and the afflicted. Its aim is to lead every person to strong faith. As the saying goes, when there is distress, then one turns to God. We wish to believe that all those whom God has helped in a difficult moment will remain on the path of salvation for the rest of their lives.

After the revival of our Church, self-appointed healers sprang up in Ukraine like mushrooms after rain—healers who do not heal but wound souls. The need to address such topics as prayer being stronger than medicine and the means of healing the soul and body proved to be extremely urgent. This, in fact, prompted us to gather all this material into this small book.

Another reason why this publication proved to be especially necessary is that in previous publications about healing through prayer, Father Vasyl and his noble activity were not always described with full accuracy.

The book *"Do Not Be Afraid, Only Believe"* is dedicated to the Christian family on the occasion of the Year of the Family, with the aim of spiritually healing the Christian family of Ukraine.

The editors of this publication deemed it necessary to make certain corrections, both linguistic and theological, to the prayers for various needs, in particular to the protective prayer of the holy hieromartyr Cyprian.

Fr. Josaphat Vorotniak, OSBM

Freely ye have received, freely give

Didst thou ever dream, O dear mother mine,
When thou didst bring thy sons forth into light,
That they with hell itself would wage their war,
And at their word the darkness quake with fright?

Julian, thy son, is now a bishop made;
Our Vasyl Voronovskyi—exorcist:
At his command the fiend doth flee in haste,
And grievous wounds are healed that long did persist.

He is most meek and kind, exceeding diligent;
In life unassuming, humble in his ways,
Enwrapped in warmth and in God's holy light,
From underground he bears the spiritual blade always.

All hell doth tremble, sensing him afar;
The Lord bestows on him the strength to strive.
Though weak in flesh, in spirit strong is he:
Where tears once fell, now joy is made alive.

All men the father comforts and consoles;
A smile abides forever on his face.
He oft doth counsel men to drink the holy water;
Belovèd is he in every town and place.

His word is firm, as tempered steel made fast;
His faith in God is granite, strong and sure.
With love for men it sparkles, bright and clear,
And draweth all as doth the lodestone pure.

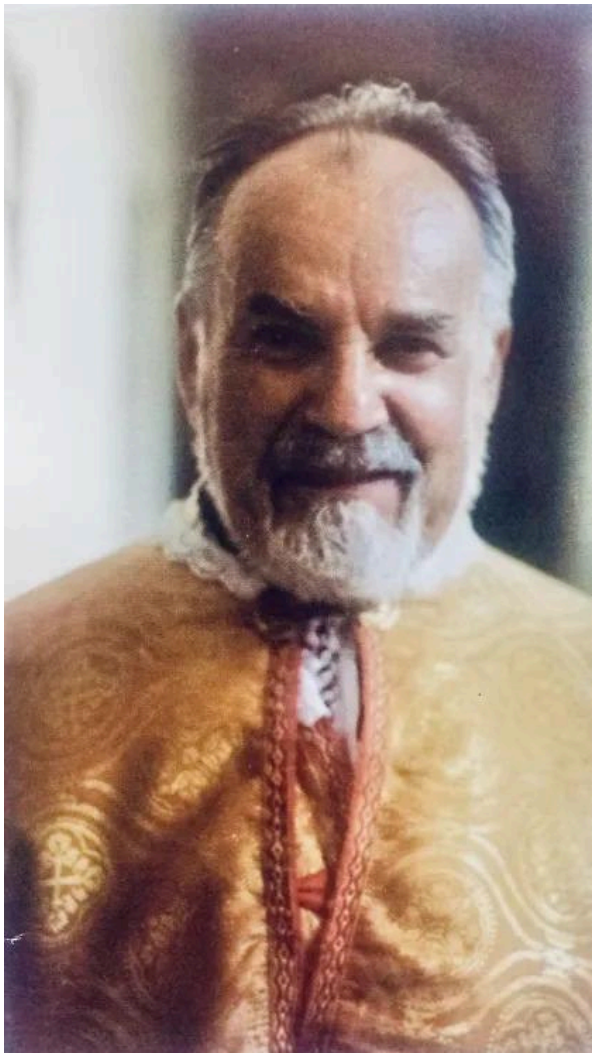
From spells and envy and from cursed words,
From evil eyes he healeth in a breath;
And in his preaching teacheth God's own folk
To fear no superstitions born of death.

"Give thanks to God, not unto me," saith he,
Doth Father Vasyl evermore repeat;
"What freely hath been given, freely give—
The Lord of Hosts bless every soul ye meet."

Fear not, but only believe! Truth shall rise again;
The power of darkness shall for ever fail.

In Christ's own life none shall victorious stand;
For every poison God prepares a heal.

Love Dīvchur,
the city of Chervonohrad



Chapter 1

The Blessed Voronovskyi Family

And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother."
(Matthew 12:49–50)

The village of Humnyska in the Busk District of the Lviv Region lies spread out upon the picturesque land along the Western Bug and is known for the ancient Voronovskyi family, which gave to the persecuted Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church zealous and self-sacrificing pastors.

In the devout, large peasant family of Semen and Yevfrosyniia Voronovskyi, who had thirteen children, two sons grew up—Josyf and Ivan. The parents raised their sons in such a way that one of them, in our catacomb Church, dedicated his life to the service of God as a hieromonk, while the sons of the other—Vasyl and Yurii—perhaps following the example of their uncle Josyf, continued to labor zealously in Christ's vineyard not only during the time of cruel persecutions and trials, but also after the UGCC emerged from the underground.

Josyf Voronovskyi was born on October 7, 1913, and was the youngest in the family. In 1938 he entered the novitiate of the

Studite Fathers in Univ, receiving at his clothing the monastic name Januarius. After successfully completing the Minor Seminary in 1944, he entered the underground Theological Seminary in Lviv. He completed the classical department of the Ivan Franko Lviv University. On November 7, 1958, he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Mykola Charnetskyi, CSsR (now Blessed of the UGCC). He was a zealous hieromonk, a noble and benevolent man. He died on the day of his eightieth birthday—October 7, 1993—having foretold the day of his death. He is buried at the Yaniv Cemetery in the place of eternal rest of the monks of the Studite Rule.

In the family of Ivan and Kseniia (née Kostyshyn) Voronovskyi three sons were raised—Mykhailo, Vasyl, and Yurii. The parents were deeply devout, and therefore from early childhood raised their children in the Christian spirit. Every Sunday the entire family went to the parish church of Saint Michael the Archangel in Humnyska: in the morning to the Divine Liturgy, and in the evening to Vespers.

Perhaps already then, by God's Providence, one of the Voronovskyi sons—Vasyl—received from the Lord, through the intercession and protection of Saint Michael, the gift to fight against evil power and to cast it out in the name of Jesus Christ, which in a particular way would later manifest itself during the years of his priestly ministry. And, remarkably, today he carries out his ministry in the Lviv

church of Saint Michael. His entire life—from Humnyska to Lviv—unfolds under the sign of Saint Michael, the warrior against evil spirits and the conqueror of Lucifer.

Each year the Voronovskyi family traveled on pilgrimages. Once the father was bathing in a river and began to drown, but was miraculously saved by grasping a branch. From that time on, together with his wife and children, he went every year on pilgrimages to give thanks to God for the miraculous deliverance from death: on the feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist—to the town of Olesko in the Busk District, to pray there before the miraculous icon of the Most Holy Mother of God; and on the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God—to the village of Mylatyn in the Busk District, where there is the miraculous image of the Merciful Crucified Jesus Christ (on August 14, 1747 this image was transferred to the church of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers in Mylatyn, and eight years later, on January 15, 1755, Archbishop Mykola Ignatii Wyżycki proclaimed it miraculous. During his visit to Ukraine in June 2001, a copy of this miraculous image was presented to His Holiness Pope John Paul II—editor's note).

The parents instilled in their three sons a love for God and a desire to serve Him; therefore, it is not surprising that two of them—Vasyl and Yurii—resolved to choose the path of consecrated life, despite the difficult and dangerous times of the UGCC's underground

existence. Vasyl will be discussed in the subsequent chapters of this book; for the present, we shall briefly acquaint the reader with the life stories of his two brothers.

The elder brother, Mykhailo, was born on November 2, 1924, in the village of Humnyska. After completing secondary school, he studied at the Ivan Franko Lviv University in the Ukrainian Department. He worked as a teacher of Ukrainian language and literature at the secondary school in Humnyska, and later in Lviv. He was married and had a son, Ihor. He died on November 18, 1998.

The younger brother, Yurii, was born on May 5, 1936, in the village of Humnyska. After completing secondary school, he studied at the Ukrainian Printing Institute in Lviv. During his studies, in 1958, he entered the monastery of the Studite Rule of the underground UGCC, receiving at his clothing the monastic name Yulian, and he made his perpetual vows in 1963.

After graduating from the institute in 1961, for fifteen years he held various positions—from engineer to department head—at the Lviv Design and Engineering Institute. Later, because of his confession of faith, he was compelled to leave his position and

worked as an ordinary laborer in a boiler house until the time when our Church emerged from the underground. While being a monk and working in state employment, he studied at the underground Lviv Theological Seminary. On October 27, 1968, he received priestly ordination in Lviv from Bishop Vasyl Velychkovskyi, CSsR (now Blessed of the UGCC). He served as prior, and later as abbot, of the Studite monastery.

Episcopal consecration was conferred upon Hieromonk Yulian by Archbishop Volodymyr Sterniuk on September 30, 1986, in Lviv. In 1991, the Head of the UGCC, Myroslav Ivan Cardinal Lubachivskyi, appointed him Archimandrite of the monks of the Studite Rule in Ukraine and Rector of the Holy Spirit Lviv Theological Seminary.

In 1993, Bishop Yulian became administrator of the newly established Sambir–Drohobych Eparchy, and on April 17, 1994, his enthronement as the ruling bishop of the said eparchy took place, the office which he continues to hold to this day.

Chapter 2

The Life and Ministry of Hieromonk Volodymyr Vasyl Voronovskyi

1. Priestly and Monastic Vocation

How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!
My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.
(Psalm 84:2–3)

Vasyl was born on May 6, 1929, in the village of Humnyska. The day of his birth, which fell on the very feast of Saint George the Wonderworker, seemed to be yet another sign from heaven that the boy would one day become a zealous fighter against the devil throughout his difficult life, having this great SAINT continually as his patron and intercessor.

When Vasyl was nine years old, the Redemptorist Fathers (monks of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer—editor's note) preached missions in his native village. The young boy joyfully attended the missionaries' sermons, which were held every morning and evening for two weeks. Already then, in the distant year of 1938, he firmly resolved to become a celibate priest and missionary, so that in this way he might have as many opportunities as possible to labor for God, the Church, and his people.

In 1942, the fourteen-year-old Vasyl entered the Minor Theological Seminary in Lviv, where he studied for several years until the day it was closed by the Soviet authorities. In 1947, he entered the German Department of the Ivan Franko Lviv University, which he completed in 1953. For seventeen years he worked as a teacher of the German language in villages of the Kamianka-Buzka and Busk districts of the Lviv region, and later at Secondary School No. 78 in Lviv, until 1970, when he was arrested for the first time by the KGB.

While working as a teacher, Vasyl continued to strive to become a priest and prayed to God for the granting of this grace. Each day he recited the prayer "Hail Mary" that the Mother of God might help him to become a good priest, for he asked but one thing of God, like the psalmist:

One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
that I may behold the beauty of the Lord,
and may visit His temple.
(Psalm 27:4–5)

Vasyl studied at the underground Theological Seminary in Lviv, acquiring knowledge of theology from the clandestine Greek Catholic bishops Mykola Charnetskyi, CSsR, and Nykanor Deineha of the Studite Rule, as well as from the Studite hieromonk

Januarius Voronovskyi and the underground Greek Catholic priest Bohdan Kovalskyi, pastor of the village of Humnyska.

On the feast of the Annunciation of the Mother of God, April 7, 1959, Vasyl was to receive priestly ordination at the hands of Bishop Mykola Charnetskyi. Having arranged this beforehand with the bishop, he came to him to receive the Holy Sacrament of Priesthood. But when he arrived in Lviv, he learned that the bishop-martyr had departed to the Lord for his eternal reward several days earlier. Bishop Mykola died in the odor of sanctity, and instead of being Vasyl's ordainer on earth, he became his intercessor and protector in heaven.

Vasyl did not lose heart and immediately rejected the first thought that he was not destined to become a priest. He understood that God had given him this trial in order to see whether His faithful servant would not lose hope, whether he would continue with firm steps toward the fulfillment of his priestly vocation. Vasyl did not cease to pray fervently for the granting to him of God's grace of the priesthood:

Plead thou my cause, O Lord, because I have walked in my innocence:
and trusting in the Lord, I shall not be moved.
(Psalm 26:1)

The long-awaited day came four months later. On August 14, 1959, Bishop Ivan Sleziuk (now Blessed of the UGCC) ordained Vasyl to the diaconate, and on the following day, Sunday, August 15, he ordained him to the priesthood. As the motto of his priestly ministry he chose the words of the psalmist:

O Lord, thou wilt open my lips:
and my mouth shall declare thy praise.
(Psalm 50:17)

Father Vasyl celebrated his first Divine Liturgy in a church in the village of Kulychkiv of the Sokal District in the Lviv region (near the town of Belz), which had been closed by the godless authorities. He concealed this joyful news—that he had become a priest—from his parents, so that they would not worry that he might be arrested and that all of them would be deported to Siberia. Only after half a year did his parents learn that their son had indeed been ordained a priest.

Several years after his priestly ordination, in 1965, Father Vasyl entered the monastery of the Studite Fathers, faithfully fulfilling the words of Jesus Christ:

And every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake,
hall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting.
(Matthew 19:29)

At his clothing, Vasyl received the monastic name Volodymyr. However, since at that time the Church was underground, he retained his baptismal name so as not to endanger his fellow monks. Even today people know him simply as Father Vasyl (and by this name we shall continue to refer to him—editor's note). In 1970 he made his perpetual monastic vows, offering his life to God as a whole-burnt sacrifice.

2. Pastoral Ministry during the Underground Period of the UGCC

2.1. The Beginnings of Priestly Ministry

Blessed are ye, when they shall revile you for the name of Christ: for the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon you.
(1 Peter 4:14)

After his ordination, Father Vasyl Voronovskyi carried out pastoral ministry in Lviv. Every Saturday and Sunday he traveled through the villages of the Lviv region, where he secretly celebrated the Divine Liturgy, since on weekdays he worked as a teacher.

Most often Father Vasyl celebrated the services in the homes of underground Greek Catholics, and at times even in churches that had been closed by the communists. Although people were forbidden to gather in churches for common prayer—and the local authorities kept vigilant watch over this—they nevertheless had

keys and, when possible, came to the church on Sundays to hear the Holy Liturgy together and to raise their prayers to God.

Father Vasyl frequently traveled to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in the villages of Fiina and Mokrotyn in the Zhovkva District. Most often he fulfilled his priestly ministry in two villages, which may rightly be called his underground parish: Dobriany in the Horodok District and Khlopchytsi in the Sambir District. There, for thirty years, the zealous hieromonk secretly celebrated various services and administered the Holy Mysteries to the faithful.

Father Vasyl always *"studied to shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;* he sought *justice, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart;* he was *gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves"* (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15, 22, 24–25).

For eleven years of sacrificial pastoral service in the towns and villages of the Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil regions, and even in many regions of Eastern Ukraine, Father Vasyl, by God's Providence, avoided arrest. The KGB constantly monitored him, yet when its agents came to arrest him, some higher power seemed to close their eyes, and they—embittered and blinded by hatred toward God's servant—departed empty-handed.

There was an instance in the village of Susoliv in the Sambir District of the Lviv region when someone reported Father Vasyl to the militia while he was celebrating the Divine Liturgy there. The militia arrived promptly. The people then managed to lead him unnoticed to the house of a party official, where he hid until morning. On another occasion, the local faithful resorted to cunning: they dressed Father Vasyl in rags, placed a staff in his hand, and thus, under the guise of a beggar, he safely left the village, which had been surrounded by KGB agents.

Once Father Vasyl arrived in the already mentioned village of Dobriany to baptize a child. Afterwards, the people placed him in a postal vehicle, which the authorities usually did not inspect, and by it he could safely reach Lviv. Several kilometers before Horodok, a sudden thought came to Father Vasyl to change to a bus. Understanding this to be the voice of God, he did so and safely arrived in Lviv. Later he learned from acquaintances that the KGB had stopped the postal vehicle in Horodok to verify the truth of a denunciation made by one of the inhabitants of Dobriany.

This was truly a proof of God's Providence, of which Father Vasyl could say with the psalmist:

Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done,
and thy thoughts which are to us-ward:
they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:

if I would declare and speak of them,
they are more than can be numbered.
(Psalm 40:5)

God truly guards His faithful servants from their enemies, does not betray their hope in Him, and does not forget them, assuring them through the prophet:

Fear thou not; for I am with thee:
be not dismayed; for I am thy God:
I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee;
yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.
Can a woman forget her sucking child?..
Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.
(cf. Isaiah 41:10)

On the feast of the Nativity of Christ, the militia arrived in the village of Khorosnytsia in the Yavoriv District of the Lviv region. Father Vasyl was celebrating the festive Divine Liturgy in the village church. There were, however, so many people present that they did not allow the policemen to enter the church, enabling the priest to withdraw to a safe place.

Often in the life of Father Vasyl it happened that God in a wondrous manner protected him from the ambushes of *"ravening wolves in sheep's clothing"* (cf. Matthew 7:15). Yet gradually and inexorably the time drew near when he too would have to suffer

much for the Lord, who tested His servant through sufferings for fidelity, as gold is tested by fire.

2.2. Blessed are Those Persecuted for Righteousness

Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect,
that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.
(2 Timothy 2:10)

Father Vasyl Voronovskyi became, like the holy Apostle Paul, that chosen vessel to whom God entrusted the task of bearing witness to Him before the godless and of suffering much for His name's sake (cf. Acts 9:15–16). Father Vasyl was arrested for the first time on February 12, 1970, on the feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs. This occurred at seven o'clock in the evening in the already mentioned village of Fiina. There he had baptized two children and heard the confessions of about forty people. The policemen arrived during the Divine Liturgy, when the people were reciting the Creed; yet, surprisingly, they allowed the priest to give Holy Communion to the faithful and to complete the Holy Liturgy, and only afterwards did they arrest him.

Father Vasyl was then sentenced to fifteen days of imprisonment in the Zhovkva prison and fined fifty rubles. Each day in prison he

performed heavy labor, and each night he was taken for interrogations to the head of the KGB. In such moments he prayed for his enemies, continually recalling the words:

For I have heard the slander of many; fear was on every side:
while they took counsel together against me,
they devised to take away my life.
(Psalm 31:13)

After the first arrest, Father Vasyl was dismissed from Secondary School No. 78, where he had been teaching. For nearly half a year he sought employment but could not find work even as a simple laborer in a factory, despite having a higher education. In those days, if a person did not work, he was considered a "parasite," for which one could also be imprisoned.

With the help of Father Yaroslav Tykhyi, who for a short time served as head of the Lviv sanitary-epidemiological station, Father Vasyl obtained employment at that institution, which was "renowned" for having a large number of underground UGCC priests working there.

For nineteen years, until his retirement, Father Vasyl worked by day as a disinfectant worker, and in the evenings traveled through nearby villages, where he carried out his pastoral ministry. He was constantly watched by the KGB, yet he often entered so-called

"pass-through" houses that had a second exit onto another street, thus escaping their vigilant eye.

Thus they were often caught by these ruses; at times they would stand for hours near a building, waiting for him to come out. In such moments he recalled the words:

Mine enemies daily oppress me:
for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.
They gather themselves together, they hide themselves,
they mark my steps.
(Psalm 56:2, 6)

Although Father Vasyl lived under the constant surveillance of the KGB, he nevertheless celebrated the Divine Liturgy every day, and on feast days even two or three Holy Liturgies in different villages.

Father Vasyl was arrested a second time exactly fifteen years later, on the same day and at the same hour as the first arrest, only this time it occurred in Lviv. He had been summoned to hear the confession of a gravely ill woman, and the KGB agents followed him to her house. This time the priest spent only one night in KGB custody, again paying a fine of fifty rubles. For him, however, this arrest was more painful than the first, because during the investigation they confiscated the most precious items for a priest: the phelonion, the chalice, the Holy Gospel, the service book, and even the antimension.

Nevertheless, Father Vasyl did not yield. During the Divine Liturgy he used holy relics in place of the antimension, an ordinary glass instead of a chalice, and he knew the texts of the Liturgy and the prayers by heart.

After the second arrest, Father Vasyl continued to minister courageously in the villages of the Lviv region, calling people to conversion and repentance, often recalling the words of the psalmist:

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
(Psalm 27:1)

This period, however, was not long, for already in 1988, in the village of Khlopchytsi, where Father Vasyl was to baptize a child, he was arrested for the third time. A full bus of militiamen arrived in the village, preceded by a "bobik" carrying their superiors. They came for him as though for the greatest criminal. At that moment he was not afraid, but recalled the event in the Garden of Gethsemane, when they came out against his Divine Teacher with swords and clubs, as against a robber, to seize Him (cf. Matthew 26:55).

The militiamen surrounded the house and conducted a search. Father Vasyl hid the phelonion and chalice under a wardrobe, and although one of the militiamen discovered them, he did not give any

sign. Afterwards Father Vasyl was taken to the Sambir KGB office, from which he was released at one o'clock in the morning, since they had no substantial evidence, having again imposed a fine of fifty rubles.

He did not complain of fatigue or exhaustion, nor did he regret the money, but he grieved only for the relics of Saint Brigid, the holy cards, and the medals that were irretrievably taken from him during the search.

Father Vasyl always preserved peace of spirit, remembering that all happens by God's permission:

Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.
(Psalm 27:3)

3. Priestly Ministry after the Legalization of the UGCC

I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints.
(Psalm 52:9)

Throughout his priestly ministry during the underground period of our Church, Father Vasyl Voronovskyi repeatedly reminded the faithful of the persecutions and the courageous perseverance of the first Christians, even unto their martyrdom, recalling to them the

words of the Lord: *"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matthew 10:22).

Just as by God's Providence, through the edict of Emperor Constantine in the year 313, the free profession of the Christian faith came about, so in 1989 the empire of evil—the Soviet Union—collapsed, and a favorable time arrived for the legal activity of our much-suffering Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

For six years Father Vasyl served sacrificially in the Lviv churches of the Transfiguration of the Lord and of Saint Michael the Archangel (on Zelena Street). After the Studite monks were given a building for a monastery on V. Vynnychenko Street, the hegumen directed him to serve in the monastic community. Later Father Vasyl carried out pastoral ministry in a large parish consisting of three villages—Univ of the Peremyshliany District, and Slovita and Yaktoriv of the Zolochiv District in the Lviv region.

However, the heavy labor of Father Vasyl during the underground years soon made itself felt. During the divine services he became so unwell that people had to carry him out of the church. For the space of a month he underwent thorough treatment, and during that time he was released from priestly duties; yet he celebrated the Divine Liturgy daily, though greatly weakened and suffering from severe dizziness.

The merciful Lord remembers His good and faithful sons. Once, despite his poor state of health, Father Vasyl traveled at the request of the parish priest to the village of Syvorohy in the Peremyshliany District of the Lviv region. During the Divine Liturgy two Studite monks supported him so that he would not fall. But after he received the Most Holy Mysteries, the dizziness immediately ceased. Father Vasyl confidently affirms that a miracle occurred in the Church of the Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God in Syvorohy, for from that time he has taken no medicine whatsoever for that ailment.

On the last Sunday of each month Father Vasyl endeavors to come to the chapel of the Transfiguration of the Lord in his native village of Humnyska, so that after the Divine Liturgy he may read prayers over the sick and perform the blessing of water. Many people from the surrounding villages and towns of the Lviv region gather at this holy place.

This sanctuary, so dear to his heart, was built by benefactors in 1993, after the UGCC emerged from the underground, on the site of the parental home in which Redemptorist Fathers Mykhailo Vynnytskyi and Mykhailo Lemishka once frequently gave retreats and celebrated the Divine Liturgy daily, and later the Studite Fathers—descendants of the illustrious Voronovskyi family: Januarius, Yulian, and Vasyl.

In 1996 the new chapel was consecrated by Metropolitan Volodymyr Sterniuk. Later a bell tower was built beside the chapel. Father Vasyl wished to install a water shrine and a Way of the Cross in the courtyard, similar to that in Lourdes in France, but unfortunately there was insufficient space for this.

In the Church of Saint Michael in Humnyska, the faithful of the UOC–KP and the UGCC pray in turn; but when Father Vasyl comes to the village, all Christians gather for the divine services, regardless of confessional affiliation.

At present Father Vasyl serves in the Church of Saint Michael the Archangel at the Monastery of Saint Joseph of the Studite Fathers in Lviv. He goes to Univ, where he once served as permanent pastor, very rarely—once or twice a year. He often participates in missions in many villages and cities of Western and Eastern Ukraine, where he reads prayers for the healing of the sick, preaches sermons, hears confessions of the faithful, and performs the blessing of water.

Father Vasyl refuses no one; he goes everywhere he is asked to come. It is true that after the difficult underground years he frequently undergoes treatment, but even while repeatedly staying in hospitals, he does not cease to carry out sacrificially his multifaceted priestly ministry.

Chapter 3

The Fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man Availeth Much

1. O Lord, Physician of souls and bodies, have mercy on us!

But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth:
I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.
(Psalm 35:13)

Father Vasyl Voronovskyi began to read prayers over the sick already during his underground priestly ministry. He first perceived this gift of healing from God several years after his ordination, in 1961. This miracle took place in the village of Fiina in the Lviv region. Once the parents of a child who awoke at night and cried out loudly asked the young hieromonk Vasyl to read prayers over her.

Father Vasyl now recalls with a smile how at first he did not even know which prayers should be read in such cases. He had no books, for at that time it was very dangerous to carry any liturgical literature, and he did not yet know the prayers for the sick by heart, since he had only recently received priestly ordination. Then Father Bohdan Repetylo, CSsR, advised him to serve the Lesser Blessing of Water, which is celebrated on a parish feast, and to read the prayer to the Mother of God, "Immaculate, undefiled...," from Small Compline.

God heard the sincere prayers of His faithful servant. The sick child was healed through God's grace and the prayer of Father Vasyl. This joyful news quickly spread throughout the entire Zhovkva District. In every village people knew of this miracle of the young priest.

People burdened with sorrow began to come to him for help and counsel, as to a priest through whom God heals not only spiritual but also bodily infirmities. Many of the sick received great relief, and often even complete healing, after the prayers which Father Vasyl read over them. And they were reminded of the times of Jesus Christ, when through His saving work *"the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the poor have the gospel preached to them"* (cf. Matthew 11:5).

"While I was imprisoned in 1970," recalls Father Vasyl, "I brought the son of one KGB officer, who was suffering from the black sickness, to the village of Dora near Yaremche in the Ivano-Frankivsk region. There the hieromonk of the Studite Rule, Father Myron, read prayers over the sick, which were very helpful. After the death of Father Myron, I was entrusted with continuing his healing mission. Later this permission of Abbot Nykanor Deineha was confirmed by Bishop Vasyl Velychkovskyi, CSsR, and Metropolitan Volodymyr Sterniuk, and afterward by Myroslav Ivan Cardinal Lubachivskyi."

Father Vasyl, despite the fact that through God's grace he helps many people to recover from bodily illness, himself very often

suffers from sickness and has even undergone several serious operations.

Surely many wonder why through him the Lord grants such numerous graces of healing to His children, yet sends illness to him. People often ask Father Vasyl why he does not heal himself, and he only replies with a smile: "I never pray for myself. I ask God for all people. The Lord gives me physical sufferings, and in everything I wholly accept the will of God."

Some people say that this is the devil's revenge, but Father Vasyl objects: "I have been sick many times, but this is not the work of the evil spirit; it is God's permission. We know that the prophet Isaiah wrote that the servant of God must take upon himself the blows of men, *'by whose stripes we are healed'* (cf. Isaiah 53:4–5). And we, the followers of Jesus, must be like Him and take upon ourselves the infirmities of others" (cf. Matthew 8:17).

In the Book of Job it is written that the Lord permitted Satan to bring it about that the sons and daughters of the righteous Job perished, all his flocks were lost, and finally his body was covered with grievous sores. Yet the righteous man endured all things patiently, saying: *"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."* We too must learn, like the righteous Job, to perceive in sufferings, illness, and misfortunes the permission of God, and to regard them as a testing of our faith.

2. By Prayer and Fasting Evil Spirits Are Cast Out

Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.
Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.
(Psalm 60:11–12)

In 1972 Father Vasyl Voronovskyi received permission from the bishop to read exorcisms.

Exorcism consists of prayers for the expulsion of an evil spirit, approved by ecclesiastical authority. Only those priests who have received permission from the bishop may recite them. If any priest or layperson were to attempt to cast out evil spirits without the bishop's authorization, he would expose himself to grave danger. This is spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles, when the sons of a Jewish high priest attempted, without authorization, to adjure the devil *"by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth,"* to which *"the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded* (cf. Acts 19:15–16).

Father Vasyl says that most often the evil spirit manifests itself in the form of fire. Concerning his first exorcism, he relates:

"The inhabitants of the urban settlement of Komarno in the Horodok District of the Lviv region came to me. In one house there,

fire began to appear without cause. They poured water on it, yet the flames flared up again. It is noteworthy that when they invited me to come to the village, words appeared on the wall of the house in which the fire was occurring: *'Do not call the priest, for I shall take revenge.'* The local people were greatly frightened, and when I arrived in the village, a great fear was felt everywhere.

After my arrival, I immediately announced in the church that for the course of a week I would conduct missions in order to draw the people back to God. And when I said that on Friday I would cast out the evil spirit, on Thursday evening six couples who had been living together without marriage came to be married in the church—they were afraid that once the devil was driven out of that house, he might come to their own homes. The next day I performed the blessing of water and read the exorcism in that house, including the adjuration. After this, the fire no longer appeared there without cause."

On another occasion, in the village of Yaktoriv in the Zolochiv District of the Lviv region, the devil again began to rage in the form of fire, threatening the lives of two small children. One child somehow found himself in the attic of the house, which was locked from the outside, and the other in the garden among the corn, bound with some kind of hair. The parents of the children asked Father Vasyl to read an exorcism. And once again, before his arrival, the devil took revenge on the people—setting fire in the yard to the

barn and the stable. Father Vasyl recounts this incident as follows: "When I arrived in the village, I learned that the parents of those children were not married in the Church and therefore did not receive the Holy Mysteries. First I married them in the church, and then I performed the blessing of water in their house, read the exorcism together with the adjuration, and from that time everything there became calm."

As always, word immediately spread throughout the surrounding area about the successful exorcism performed by Father Vasyl, and the faithful of both the Greek Catholic and Orthodox confessions came with banners into the courtyard, singing hymns of thanksgiving to God.

In the village of Kobyvoloky in the Terebovlia District of the Ternopil region, for more than two months the evil spirit manifested its power through fire, burning floors, attics, a haystack, and fences on four homesteads. Firefighters came to extinguish the fires, but nothing helped, for when the fire was put out at one homestead, it would begin burning at another. Finally they said they would come no more, even if the whole village were to burn. The village was large—nine hundred houses—and all the inhabitants were faithful of the Orthodox Church.

Once again, Father Vasyl was called. After he read the exorcism, the long-awaited peace came upon the village, and all the faithful glorified God and gave Him thanks.

Father Vasyl can cite many examples of successful exorcisms. During prayers for the expulsion of evil spirits, as many witnesses attest, it even happened that various inhuman screams and roars were heard, and even sounds resembling barking or crowing.

"This is true," Father Vasyl confirms the testimony of the faithful, "at times people cry out so loudly that one cannot even hear the prayers which I am reading. Yet after the exorcism such people often receive healing.

Once a woman cried out throughout the entire Matins, not allowing me to celebrate the service peacefully; but when I performed the exorcism over her, she immediately became calm and later even said that she remembered nothing."

Just as the evil spirits complained against Jesus Christ in the land of the Gadarenes, asking why He had come to torment them before the time (cf. Matthew 8:28), so, without doubt, the unclean spirits fear the power of the prayer of Father Vasyl, who comes in the name of God to the sick and the afflicted, fearlessly casting out the devil and healing various infirmities among our people.

3. Lviv's Bethesda

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool,
which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda,
having five porches.
In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk,

of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water...
for whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in
was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.
(John 5:2–4)

Every Monday numerous pilgrims from various cities and villages of Ukraine come to the Church of Saint Michael the Archangel, located near Pidvalna Street in Lviv (22 V. Vynnychenko Street).

Before the closed doors of this renowned church in 1989, thousands of Greek Catholic faithful, led by courageous priests of the UGCC, took part in the first Greek Catholic services despite prohibitions and the vigilant surveillance of the KGB authorities. Here the revival of the UGCC began. It is precisely to this church that many people, afflicted in soul and body, come with faith and hope for healing, so as to leave it renewed in spirit, with joy and relief in their hearts, and many of them also physically healed. All this comes about through the fervent prayers of the Studite hieromonk Vasyl Voronovskyi.

On that grace-filled day he administers to the faithful the Holy Mysteries of Repentance and the Most Holy Eucharist, celebrates the Divine Liturgy, preaches sermons, reads prayers over the sick and exorcisms for the casting out of evil spirits, and prayers over married couples who are childless. After the prayers he blesses water, oil, vinegar, salt, poppy seeds, as well as various religious items, such as icons, rosaries, medals, holy cards, and the like.

These prayers last from nine o'clock in the morning until midday, and very often even longer. People come for spiritual help to Father Vasyl from all over Ukraine, and even from beyond its borders.

While reading the prayers, Father Vasyl always holds in his hand a miraculous cross, with which he proclaims the word of God, heals the sick, and casts out evil spirits. With this cross he has been in Rome (Italy), Paris, Ars, and Paray-le-Monial (France), and at places of miraculous apparitions of the Mother of God, especially in renowned Lourdes on French soil. With this cross he has touched miraculous icons and the relics of saints.

Father Vasyl always tells people that they must first ask God's forgiveness for their sins and thus implore from Him the grace of healing. Before these prayers one should go to confession and sincerely receive the Eucharistic Jesus into one's heart.

People must assist him by their faith and prayer, and he, when praying over them, in turn asks Jesus: "Lord, Thou didst walk upon the earth two thousand years ago and didst heal the sick, and now Thou abidest in the Most Holy Eucharist—heal these people who have come to Thee with faith, beseeching healing."

Father Vasyl says: "I always ask the Lord to have mercy on and heal these people, just as once He healed the blind, the deaf, the mute, the paralytic, and the lepers. During the Divine Liturgy, before the Eucharistic sacrifice, whenever I am about to pronounce the words

of Jesus, 'Drink ye all of this' and 'Take, eat,' I continually turn to our Divine Savior with these words: 'Jesus, behold how many people have come to Thee today in hope of healing. Have mercy on them and help them in their infirmities.'

Jesus Christ comes to us under the appearances of bread and wine, and just as He healed people in times past, so now He heals those who come with faith that He is able to heal them. And when I pronounce the words, 'Thine own of Thine own,' I also remember those people who have come to the Physician of human weakness and ask Him: 'Jesus, these are Thine—heal them.'"

Many people who have been present at Father Vasyl's prayers later come to him to give thanks for their healing. The priest rejoices sincerely with them in their recovery, both bodily and spiritual, yet he always says: "Give thanks to God, and not to me, so that you too, like the contemporaries of Jesus, may return to your homes *'glorifying and praising God'* for the grace of healing."

Father Vasyl never takes money from people, except if they wish to make a voluntary offering to the monastery or to give for the Divine Liturgy as a sign of gratitude to the Lord. He often reminds the faithful of Christ's words: *"Freely ye have received, freely give."* (Matthew 10:8)

Chapter 4

Illness — God's Permission!

1. A Christian View of Illness

And they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments,
and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy;
and he healed them.
(Matthew 4:24)

Every person must pass through the thorny path of illness in order to be united with God in this temporal life and later in eternity. It is difficult to imagine that there has ever lived a person in this world who, on the way to God, did not experience some form of illness.

An unbelieving person very often begins to believe in God only through sickness and comes to realize that he has squandered his time pursuing material well-being and bodily pleasures, without giving thought to eternity.

When a person looks upon life's problems with the eyes of faith, he always places his hope in God and asks help of Him. In illness or sorrow he realizes that he will be able to endure any sickness which Christ will lighten for him, for He said: *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28)

The believing person knows that for those sufferings which he patiently endures, God will reward him in eternity, and not infrequently already here on earth.

When a person believes, even in illness he entrusts himself to God as to a loving Father. Yet because at times it is difficult for him, he often, like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, prays: *"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me."* (cf. Matthew 26:39)

Jesus asked the Father three times that the cup of suffering might pass from Him, and after the Father did not grant His request, He joyfully drank this cup of suffering to the very last drop.

Every illness is such a cup, and a Christian manifests his faith and trust in God by not losing hope when his prayer is not answered. In many cases illness has contributed to the growth of faith in the sick, who came to understand that God is a loving Father not only when He heals from illness, but also when He visits them with prolonged sickness.

Often God does not immediately answer the prayers of believers, and there are times when it even seems that He has not answered them at all. Therefore a true Christian must act according to the example of Jesus, that is, add to his prayer the words: *"Not my will, but thine, be done."* (cf. Luke 22:42)

Then the person who accepts God's will will feel relief in the soul,

just as Jesus was comforted by an angel before His terrible sufferings.

People must believe that when they sincerely ask the Lord for help, the merciful God will hear them: *"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."* (Matthew 21:22) One must pray with strong faith, *"nothing wavering,"* as Saint James says in his epistle (cf. James 1:6).

A believing person in illness must first turn for help to the Lord, the Physician of souls and bodies, and only afterward seek help from men. Prayer is stronger than medicine, for by prayer we cry out to the Almighty God, imploring from Him healing.

The first condition for a prayer to be heard is reconciliation with God and with one's neighbor. A person must make amends for the wrong done to another, both moral and material. The second condition for God's hearing of prayer is the inner disposition of the person: gratitude to the Lord for all things and trust in Him.

Prayer is first of all praise and glorification of God in various ways: people pray with hands lifted toward heaven, standing or kneeling, singing psalms (the theme of a third of the one hundred fifty psalms is the praise of God).

More powerful than personal prayer is communal prayer. The Church was born in an atmosphere of common prayer. Therefore it is necessary that not only the sick person pray, but also his closest

relatives, who help him, approaching—like the Holy Mysteries—and praying together with him, as it was in the first centuries of Christianity, when the early Christians *"were with one accord continuing steadfastly in prayer"* (cf. Acts 1:14).

Christians must pray with thanksgiving, for in both the Old and the New Testaments thanksgiving was always an integral part of prayer. The faithful should not murmur, but rather see in illness a means for the purification of the soul and growth in perfection.

God permits illness because He does not desire the death of the sinner, but urges him toward repentance. Very often, after long wanderings from doctor to doctor, a person remembers God, the Physician above all physicians, and turns to Him as to the last hope of salvation. In the Gospel there is told the story of a woman who had suffered from an issue of blood for twelve years. Having spent all her substance on various physicians and charlatans, she at last, with great faith, turned to Jesus and was healed (cf. Mark 5:25–34).

Thus, were it not for illness, many—like the woman with the issue of blood—would never remember God nor come to Him, thereby missing the most important purpose of their life on earth: the salvation of their immortal soul and the attainment of eternal happiness.

2. Prayer Is Stronger than Medicine

(Interview with Father Vasyl Voronovskyi)

Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.
O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord:
my goodness extendeth not to thee.
(Psalm 16:1–2)

Many people come to you for prayer already after an operation, often one that was unsuccessfully performed, and they beg for help. In your opinion, should one turn to a priest before or after an operation?

God works miracles, and therefore I would not advise turning immediately to a surgeon. If it is a cancerous tumor, after the operation it may not disappear, but on the contrary may progress even more. Whereas in another case, perhaps the Lord, having heard the prayers, will perform a miracle and the person will become healthy.

Once a woman came to me who had a malignant tumor on her breast. I prayed over her and advised her to rub the afflicted place with holy water and oil. After some time the tumor disappeared. Another woman suffered from a very severe form of cancer and was no longer even able to rise from her bed. I read prayers over her and administered to her the Holy Mystery of Anointing. After a month she came to me completely healed.

Thus it is good for people to know that prayer truly is stronger than medicine. I do not say that medicine is unnecessary, but it is not all-powerful; only God alone is almighty.

People believe that epilepsy is the work of the devil. Do you agree with this?

I think that epilepsy, or as people say, "the black sickness," in most cases is a terrible illness and not the result of the action of an evil spirit. I will give such an example. During the war one young woman was severely wounded in the head. Later, having felt a calling to monastic life, she entered the monastery of the Studite Sisters, but soon fell ill with the "black sickness." The nun came to me for prayers twelve times, after which the illness finally departed from her, and now she is completely healthy.

Thus, I think that epilepsy can only rarely be regarded as the work of the devil; more often it is the consequence of a severe injury (for example, when some nerve has been damaged) or of great fright.

I know of one case when a drunken father came home late, and his small son was already asleep. In a fit of rage he beat the child, and from that fright the child fell ill with this terrible disease. After long prayers, by God's grace, the boy became healthy.

Many people have prayed long and unceasingly, and God heard their prayers, healing those afflicted with epilepsy. In such cases doctors

are powerless; they cannot cure the "black sickness," but after prayer many people have been freed from this illness.

Have there been cases in your priestly practice when a child began to speak after you read prayers over him?

Once a woman brought to me a child who was already six years old but had not yet spoken. I read prayers over the child and anointed his throat and mouth with holy oil, and when he went out into the corridor, he began to speak.

Everyone had thought that the child would never speak. The mother wept for joy and to this day gives thanks to God that He had mercy on her child.

Do you remember any other healings that people received after your prayers?

Yes, I recall how a woman once came to me from Boryslav and complained that she had not slept for three months and that doctors could do nothing for her. I read prayers over her and told her to drink holy water. I was very glad when, after some time, she came back and said that the sleeplessness was gone and that she was sleeping well.

At times people were brought to me from psychiatric hospitals for prayers, and later they told me that those patients had recovered and were discharged from the hospital.

Often married couples are unable to have children. Have there been positive cases when God blessed couples with offspring after your prayers?

I know very well one married couple over whom I read prayers. Now this couple are happy parents—God gave them two healthy children.

Childless married couples often come to me for help, and the Lord hears our common prayers, blessing their marriage with children. Unfortunately, not infrequently young couples who cannot have children, having lost hope, begin to go from doctor to doctor and to fortune-tellers, who take large sums of money from them but help in nothing, instead of first turning for help to God, who is the Giver of life.

Have there been cases when people were freed from alcohol addiction through your prayers?

Yes, very many. I will give one example which I remember among many others. One man drank heavily, then left his wife and began living with another woman. Afterwards his wife came to me with tears in her eyes and said that their son was threatening to throw himself from the fifth floor if his father did not return home.

I then went to that man and told him that the child wished to end his life by suicide, and that if this were to happen, the woman might even lose her mind.

Then I prayed over him for a long time, and God's grace acted very powerfully upon him. He sincerely repented, confessed, and returned to his wife. Truly a miracle occurred: the man was freed from alcohol addiction and now leads a decent Christian life.

We know that not only the sick came to Jesus, but also people with crafty and evil intentions, for example the Pharisees and scribes, and He exposed them. Have people ever come to you for prayers with the intention of harming you or the faithful?

Not infrequently people come into the church simply to listen or to observe. But when I read the prayers and see that someone does not even make the sign of the cross, I already surmise that an unbeliever has come.

I always perform the anointing with my finger and not with a brush. And more than once, when I make the sign of the cross on a person's forehead, I suddenly feel a sharp pain in my finger. Then I ask that person whether he has been to confession, and I hear the reply that he does not go to confession, because for serious reasons the priests do not grant him absolution.

Thus, when a person is not in the state of God's grace, some invisible power lets me know this by sharply pricking my finger. Otherwise, all people are the same to me.

There have been cases when sorcerers and fortune-tellers attempted to harm me within the very church itself, but their evil deeds did not have lasting consequences.

One day I was praying over the sick before the open Royal Doors, but during the prayer some priest closed them. I paid no attention to this and continued praying. Suddenly I was seized by a very high fever (up to 40° C). After prolonged prayers it dropped as sharply as it had risen. Most likely this was the work of one of those fortune-tellers who were present in the church at that time.

Since then I always open the Royal Doors before reading the prayers and then pray over the sick, because in this way I better realize and more strongly believe that Jesus, who is invisibly present in the Most Holy Eucharist, protects me from any hostile influence.

Chapter 5

"I Renounce Satan!"

1. What Is Exorcism?

"In my name shall they cast out devils." (Mark 16:17)

Satan (from the Greek *diabolos* — "slanderer," and from the Hebrew *satan* — "adversary") is, as it were, incarnate evil, the adversary of God's saving plan, who assails and leads human beings into sin. And although Jesus Christ, by His saving death and Resurrection, destroyed the power of the devil and "by death overcame death," the definitive victory over him will take place only at the Second Coming of the Divine Savior upon the earth. Together with the devil, his servant the Antichrist will also be defeated.

Man comes into this world bearing original sin, that is, under the dominion of the devil. For this reason, during Holy Baptism the priest reads an exorcism—the so-called prayer of prohibition—which begins with the words: *"The Lord rebukes thee, O devil."* And the catechumen (an adult being baptized) or the godparents, in the name of the infant, declare: *"I renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his angels, and all his service, and all his pride."*

Yet there are Christians who later require repeated prayers of exorcism, because in one way or another the evil spirit has again gained power over them.

Exorcism is a prayer in the name of Jesus Christ for the expulsion of an evil spirit. It often happens that the devil gains dominion over a person who, through a sinful life, has allowed him to oppress the soul and body and to rule over them. There are, however, cases when the victim of the devil is an innocent person, or even an infant. Theologians, not knowing the reason for this, call it the mystery of evil.

In this enslavement to Satan, his servants—fortune-tellers, occult practitioners, and the like—very often play a role. Only God Himself can help a person emerge from this oppressive state, and He ordinarily does so through an exorcist.

The devil enters the soul of every person by means of grave sin. But through holy Confession and the reception of Holy Communion, a person receives sanctifying grace, which drives the evil spirit out of the soul. At every confession, when the priest gives absolution to the penitent, he says: *"Go in peace and sin no more,"* that is, in accordance with the Holy Gospel, he warns him that something worse may befall him if he continues in sin.

The word *"worse"* signifies the complete enslavement of a person to the devil, who then no longer allows that person to repent of sins

and to save the soul. A clear example of such total enslavement are sorcerers and fortune-tellers, who never sincerely confess and thus sin against the Holy Ghost. For such people, sadly, heaven is closed, because Jesus said that the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven *"neither in this world, nor in the world to come"* (Matthew 12:32).

There are, however, exceptional cases in which a person who has already renounced grave sins and frequently receives Holy Communion continues to be tormented by the devil—that is, the evil spirit has not yet departed from the body. In such a case, the exorcist must repeatedly read the prayers for the expulsion of the evil spirit.

But after the devil has departed from a person's body, that person must strive to live continually in the grace of God, frequently approach the Holy Mysteries, observe the commandments of God, and then the evil spirit will not be able again to gain dominion over the soul and body. Before proceeding to the reading of an exorcism, one must act with great caution, because there are cases in which a person is suffering from mental illness and should seek help from a psychiatrist. However, before referring such a person to a physician, it is necessary to ascertain whether the individual is not in fact possessed by an evil spirit.

If it is not an illness but a demonic possession, such a person reacts in an unusual manner to holy water and to blessed religious objects,

such as a cross or a medal. Very often, according to the testimony of the exorcist Fr. Gabriele Amorth, some invisible force prevents such a person from entering a church; the person may faint, yawn incessantly, fall into extreme distraction, scream uncontrollably in different voices, roll upon the ground, or even blaspheme God. Other signs of possession, indicating that exorcism is necessary, include severe illness for which physicians are unable to establish a diagnosis, marital infidelity in a family where harmony had always prevailed, a sudden change of character, continual misfortune, and similar disturbances.

We often ask ourselves why a demon would wish to dwell in the body of a human being, when its proper place is hell. The reason is that the devil envies man, who has an open path to the Kingdom of God and may inherit it by becoming a child of God. The devil himself has been deprived of this eternal happiness; therefore he tempts man so that man might follow him into eternal condemnation.

Some evil spirits "specialize" in particular passions and sins, enticing human beings toward them. When a sin becomes habitual, it turns into a vice. In their spiritual writings, the Fathers of the Church—especially Saint Ephrem the Syrian and Saint John Climacus—speak of eight evil spirits of the passions: gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, sadness, despondency, vainglory, and pride.

In the Holy Gospel it is said that the devil loves to dwell in a person as though in his own house. When a demon is driven out, he attempts, according to the words of Jesus Christ, to return again: *"And when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith: I will return into my house from whence I came out"* (Matthew 12:43–44).

These words, warning that the devil may return and make a person's condition worse than before, were not spoken by our Divine Savior in order to instill fear of the devil's power, but to call us to constant vigilance over our house—that is, over our soul.

Just as a prudent householder places iron bars upon the windows of his home so that a thief may not break in, so too must a good Christian be conscious of the need to shut tightly the windows and doors of the soul against unwelcome guests. This means that a person must remain continually in the grace of God, which does not allow the devil to gain dominion over him again.

2. Resist the devil, steadfast in faith

(Interview with Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi)

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

(James 4:7)

Can people see the devil?

The devil is a spirit who, however, can at times assume a visible form—that is, he can be seen or heard—but usually these are visual or auditory hallucinations. Even in those houses where the devil set various things on fire, people saw only the fire itself.

Nevertheless, in my priestly practice there were cases when a young woman was struck dumb after seeing an evil spirit during an evening gathering, and when I was blessing a house, a small boy said that he saw the devil running from corner to corner, fleeing from the holy water.

If something strange happens in a house, is the cause the action of an evil spirit?

When people are afraid and cannot sleep in a house because they hear strange knocking sounds, or even feel as though someone is walking through the rooms or speaking, this is unquestionably the work of an evil spirit—especially if objects fall without cause or something begins to burn. A good force does not frighten a person, but leads one toward good.

How can a person rid himself of the fear brought upon him by the devil?

Such a person must first of all make a good confession and receive Holy Communion, and also wash himself with holy water. It is advisable to call a priest to bless the house with holy water and oil.

The devil flees from holy water, incense, and exorcism, by which the priest adjures him. He also fears blessed religious objects, but most of all he fears the blessed Cross. Therefore, at Vespers we sing:

"As an unconquerable weapon hast Thou given us, O Christ, Thy Cross; by it we overcome the enemy's wiles. Having ever Thy Cross as our help, O Christ, we easily tear apart the enemy's snares."

(from the fourth tone at Thursday Vespers — editor's note)

There is nothing surprising when the devil possesses a sinful person, but some say that his servants can even 'bewitch' a believing person—one who receives Holy Communion daily—unto death. What do you think about this?

I do not entirely agree with this. If such a thing happens to a practicing Christian, the cause may be weak faith or a bad confession—that is, the concealment of some grave sin in the last confession or in one of the previous confessions. I often advise people, when such misfortune occurs in a family, to make a confession of their whole life, to sprinkle the house with holy water,

and then to scatter blessed salt in the form of a cross beneath the threshold, and to do this for nine days. The evil spirit fears blessed salt. Even in the Old Testament there is mention of the prophet Eliseus, who by means of salt made poisoned water wholesome, driving away the devil and putting an end to his evil work, saying these words: "There shall be no more death, nor barrenness" (cf. 4 Kings 2:19–22).

Must an exorcist fast before reading an exorcism?

Yes, and for this we find confirmation in Sacred Scripture. In the Acts of the Apostles it is written concerning the laying on of hands upon Barnabas and Saul: "Then they fasting and praying, and imposing their hands upon them, sent them away" (Acts 13:3). Following their example, even today before the ordination of a candidate to the diaconate, priesthood, or episcopate, bishops fast and pray.

An exorcist likewise fasts and prays before the expulsion of the devil, imploring the Holy Spirit that through him He may descend upon the possessed person and free him from diabolical oppression. However, the fasting of an exorcist differs from the ordinary fast prescribed by the Church, when one abstains from meat or dairy. The exorcist fasts by complete abstinence, that is, he eats nothing on the day on which he intends to expel a demon.

And what would happen if you read an exorcism after having eaten?

A priest who is satiated cannot read an exorcism, because there exists a danger that the devil may harm him. It is easier for the evil spirit to take vengeance on an exorcist who does not fast before prayers of exorcism and thus does not remain in a strong disposition of prayer. I had such a case when the devil harmed me, and therefore I am now afraid to do so.

Once a young woman was celebrating the New Year with friends. I had already eaten supper and gone to bed, when they came to me in the middle of the night to save her: she had been dancing, saw a demon, and from fear became mute. Taking the Most Holy Mysteries with me, I went to her. I blessed the house with holy water, read the exorcism, and the girl began to speak. Then I heard her confession and gave her Holy Communion. I returned home around one o'clock in the morning. In the morning I rose and tried to speak, but no sound came forth. The spirit of muteness had departed from the girl and passed to me. After long prayers the devil finally withdrew from me. From that time I resolved never again to read an exorcism after having eaten.

Some priests say that the sick must strictly fast before exorcisms are read over them. Do you also think so?

Yes, because through prayer and fasting a person is closely united with God and is accordingly open to the action of the Holy Spirit. However, I believe that, unlike exorcists, the sick should fast only for one hour before these prayers.

Are you not afraid when you go to expel the devil?

I always take the Most Holy Mysteries upon my breast when I go to read prayers of adjuration. If Jesus Christ is with me, I fear nothing. Yet the devil has taken vengeance on me several times. I shall recount one instance. This happened in Lviv several years ago, when I was traveling to the town of Komarno to expel an evil spirit. As soon as I approached the car, the rear window suddenly shattered into small fragments; then unexpectedly the alarm activated, which the driver could not shut off in any way. The siren did not cease from the monastery of the Studite Fathers all the way to St. George's Cathedral.

Thus the evil spirit placed obstacles before me, so that I might fear him and not go to that town; nevertheless, I still went and successfully performed the exorcism there. I wish to add, however, that the devil, by his vengeance, has no power to inflict spiritual harm upon a person without that person's consent; yet he can take revenge by causing material losses, just as evil spirits harmed the

inhabitants of the country of the Gerasenes by driving their herd of swine into the sea (cf. Matthew 8:28–32).

The Lord at times permits the evil spirit to inflict material damage upon a person, so that in this way he may have the opportunity to grow in faith, without murmuring and without falling into despair.

Is suicide an action of the evil spirit?

I think that in many cases a person is urged to commit suicide by the devil. As an example, I shall relate the following case.

Once in Skhidnytsia, near Drohobych in the Lviv region, Freemasons held a gathering of members of their organization, and after this an evil spirit took hold there, urging people to suicide. Within a short period of time, about fifty persons in the village ended their lives by hanging. At the request of the villagers, I read exorcisms, celebrated the blessing of water, and organized a large prayer procession throughout the area. After that, thanks be to God, the number of suicides significantly decreased.

I will give another example. I heard from one priest that the daughter of an alcoholic fervently prayed for her father's deliverance from alcohol addiction. The devil took revenge on that girl by urging her to suicide. She was already prepared to do so, but she was saved from this act by the prayer of the Rosary, which her relatives

and friends were praying at that very time. By the power of sincere prayer, the evil spirit of suicide departed from the girl.

However, I wish to say that some cases of suicide are not the result of the action of the evil spirit, but are caused by mental illness. If a psychiatrist confirms the psychological instability of the person who took his own life, then the Catholic Church permits the celebration of a church funeral.

The cunning of the prince of this world
(interview with Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi)

"Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour"

(1 Peter 5:8).

Recently many so-called healers and psychics have appeared in Ukraine, claiming that they can cure any illness. Do you agree that they are servants of the devil?

If people knew by what means those "healers" treat illnesses and what consequences arise from it, they would never seek their help. Often, after their healing sessions, a person is cured of one illness but falls ill with another, because the diseased organ draws energy from a healthy one. After such "treatments" many people suffer

psychological disorders. A lengthy article about such self-appointed healers was published in the journal *Missionary* (nos. 7–8, 2003).

A Christian who goes to be "treated" by healers or psychics enters into contact with unclean powers and thereby betrays Jesus Christ and his faith in Him. I have heard that we already have some Turk who allegedly cures any illness. I tell people that by going to be treated by a pagan connected with the devil, they cease to be Christians in any meaningful sense.

First people go to the servants of the devil seeking help, and then, when that does not help, they turn to a priest, begging the Lord for deliverance. Afterward they must long implore God to obtain forgiveness from Him, and even healing, if such be His holy will.

After those sessions people buy photographs of self-appointed healers and do not even suspect that together with them they are bringing an evil spirit into their homes. They think that psychics or fortune-tellers will help them recover. But this is not so. The following case may serve as an example.

A woman worked with me at the sanitary-epidemiological station. To her neighbor, who could not walk, some psychic from Kyiv came and truly worked a "miracle": the woman walked for two weeks, even without a cane. However, after that "treatment" she could not even rise from her bed. The devil will perform some miracle for a

week, even for a month, in order to entice a person; but later that person falls ill with an even worse disease.

Holy Church forbids the faithful to go to all manner of psychics and fortune-tellers. Already in the Old Testament God revealed through the prophet Isaiah to His people: "I make void the signs of diviners, and turn wise men backward, and make their knowledge foolish" (Isaiah 44:25).

They say that psychics, who are ordinary laypeople—and some of them even non-Christians—"bless" water. Have you heard of such a phenomenon?

Yes, I have heard of this. However, I always tell the faithful that God's grace does not descend upon such water; worse still, it becomes an instrument of the devil. I advise people not to use water that has been "blessed" by anyone other than a priest, because it will bring them only harmful consequences.

We know of such healers who pray, keep icons in their homes, direct people to confession, and even do not take money for their services, yet still arouse suspicion by their actions. What do you think about this?

To some priests, consecrated persons, and also to laypeople, the Lord grants the grace to heal the sick. However, all of them must observe the words of Jesus Christ, who said that whatever they have

received freely, they must give freely. When a person abuses God's gifts, the Lord takes them away from him. Then very often some people pass from the ranks of God's instruments into the ranks of the servants of the devil, beginning to engage in "white" or "black" magic.

Representatives of "white" magic often do not themselves realize that they have fallen under the power of the devil. They continue to pray, advise the sick to go to church and frequently receive the Holy Mysteries, yet they begin to employ various magical methods (for example, pouring molten wax, removing the evil eye by means of matches, and the like), that is, they combine prayer with various pre-Christian (pagan) customs and superstitions.

Very often practitioners of "white" magic instill fear in people, telling them that someone has "worked magic" upon them, thus stirring up mutual hostility among neighbors and relatives. The more a person believes that something has been "done" to him, the more it truly can be done to him. A person who lives in the grace of God should have no fear that someone might "work magic" against him or "bewitch" him.

What is the difference between "black" magic and "white" magic?

Representatives of "black" magic, as I have already said, always seek to harm a person, unlike representatives of "white" magic, who wish to help him; yet the result of their actions is also harmful to him. However, both in "black" and in "white" magic various magical acts are performed, which take place through the assistance of the evil spirit.

"Black" magic is direct service to the devil. It usually instills fear of failures, misfortunes, various difficulties and troubles; it arouses excessive curiosity about the future, a desire to know things which God has hidden for man's own good, a desire for power, and a striving for success, fame, and wealth at any cost (for example, at the cost of the suffering or even the life of others).

Among the practitioners of "black" magic are those who engage in fortune-telling, astrology, chiromancy, spiritism, hypnosis, Satanism, and the like. They attempt to offend or despise God; they receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ while remaining in sin; they make insincere confessions, concealing their sins; and Satanists even break crosses, smash tabernacles, and profane the Most Holy Mysteries.

In the village of Solonka near Lviv, there is an Orthodox priest who supposedly heals people, but, as people say, "he does not heal but maims." You have certainly heard of him. What can you say about this?

The healing practices of some people, even priests, sometimes have negative consequences. Such persons are like a tree that bears bad fruit, and according to the teaching of the Gospel it must be considered bad: "A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but an evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (cf. Matthew 7:17). This is discussed at length in the journal *Missionary* (no. 2, 2003).

People come to me and say that this priest even allows people to look into the chalice. But why should this be done? We know that the chalice contains the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and that we receive Him in Holy Communion. I tell people that they receive our Lord Jesus Christ Himself in the Most Holy Eucharist, and He already abides in their hearts—so why should they still peer into the chalice?

I was even told that he claims that I am already old and therefore handed over to him the gift of healing. But I do not even know him, nor can I hand anything over to anyone, not even to a Catholic priest. Permission to read exorcisms is given by a bishop, and the gift of healing is granted by God. What he says is untrue; and if a-

priest speaks falsehood, then he is no longer a servant of God and is not doing God's work.

What should Christians do so that fortune-tellers cannot harm them?

I have already mentioned that the best protection for believers against the servants of the devil is life in the grace of God—that is, the observance of God's commandments, frequent reception of the Holy Mysteries, and the practice of fasting and prayer.

Fortune-tellers often tell people that some misfortune or sorrow has befallen them because neighbors or relatives have "worked something" against them. They say this in order to sow hatred and anger among people, and that is precisely what the devil desires.

Practicing Christians should not fear that someone has "worked magic" against them—for example, by burying some bones under their house or pouring "dead water" under their threshold. Even if people do find something suspicious, they should throw it away, sprinkle that place with holy water, and then no diabolical incantation has any power. God's power is almighty. Let people fear nothing, for without God's permission not even a hair will fall from their head.

Jesus forgave those who tortured and crucified Him, and prayed for them, saying: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). So we too must forgive everyone, and God will

reward us for this; and those who have "worked evil" against us, God Himself will judge. God is a just judge: He rewards good and punishes evil.

Two editions of a booklet have already been published under the titles *I Heal by Prayer* and *Healing by Prayer*, containing material about your life and activity. It is known that Volodymyr Hromyk published them without your knowledge or permission. In these booklets it is stated that you allow people to pour wax, lead, and the like. Is this true?

When the publishers were preparing those editions for print, I did not even know what was written in them. I believe that before publishing those booklets, the compilers should have shown me the final version of the text; then I would have pointed out that there was an error.

The compilers incorrectly quoted my words regarding the pouring of wax. I have never approved of this, nor have I ever sent anyone to fortune-tellers who remove the evil eye, fright, and the like by pouring wax. I may have said that on the Feast of Theophany, during the blessing of water, the priest extinguishes candles in the water and then the wax floats, but no one divines from it, nor draws any conclusions from the figures that appear.

Are sects a product of the devil?
To a certain extent, yes. Sects are created by people under the influence of the evil spirit. This is not God's work, because sects divide the Church, and Jesus clearly said that there must be one flock (cf. John 10:16).

The very word *sect* comes from the Latin *secere*, which means "to cut into pieces one whole." Thus every sect tears away some portion of the faithful from the Church of Christ, proclaiming itself the only true church, and even asserting that only its members will attain salvation. Sectarians deceive people with their false teachings, denying the true doctrine of the Church concerning the Holy Mysteries, the Most Holy Mother of God, the veneration of icons, rejecting Sacred Tradition, the supreme spiritual authority of the Pope of Rome, and the like.

A Christian who joins a sect is in fact seeking salvation apart from the Savior, and truth apart from the one Teacher, as the well-known exorcist Fr. Gabriele Amorth says. The devil wishes to rule over all people, and therefore he employs a cunning tactic expressed in the Latin saying: *divide et impera*—divide and rule. From the very beginnings of the Church he has sought to divide it into various small groups, creating opposition and hostility in order to destroy the Church of Christ, which is God's work. But when Christ founded the Church, He assured us that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (cf. Matthew 16:18).

Many people have departed from the Church of Christ and gone into sects because there they can receive free literature, money for various needs, and the like. By such actions they betray Jesus Christ and His true faith and teaching, just as Judas betrayed Him because of greed for money. Yet Judas made no use of that money; in despair he threw it into the temple before the Jewish high priests and afterward hanged himself. Judas lacked the courage to go to Jesus Christ beneath the cross and ask Him for forgiveness. And I am convinced that if he had done so, Jesus would have forgiven him everything. Then Judas would have become a fervent apostle, preaching to people and warning them not to be as greedy as he had been.

Sects were founded by proud and disobedient people who rejected the teaching authority of the Church, such as Arius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, and in the late Middle Ages Martin Luther and his numerous followers.

In more recent times many preachers of Krishnaism, Buddhism, and other Eastern religions have appeared in Ukraine, and Islam has also spread considerably. The followers of Muhammad have committed much evil on our lands, particularly, as we know, during the Tatar-Mongol invasions, when they spread their faith by fire and sword, acting according to the principle of so-called holy war, *jihad*: the more non-Muslims you kill, the sooner you will reach heaven. But that leads not to heaven, but to hell.

I call all people who have gone into sects to repentance and conversion, recalling the words of Christ: "Repent, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). Let people beg God's forgiveness and zealously adhere to the teaching of Holy Church, and they shall be saved; and after death a great reward will await them in heaven.

Have there been cases when, through your prayers, people who had been drawn into sects or by preachers of non-Christian religions returned to the true faith of Christ?

Yes, I even know of one young man who joined the Krishnaite sect, and shortly thereafter he was placed in a psychiatric hospital. His parents called me to save their son. In conversation with him I said: "My child, that is a diabolical faith, a pagan one—how could you go into that sect?" After a sincere conversation he repented and returned to the Catholic Church, made his confession, and received Holy Communion. After that I read prayers over him for healing, and on the second or third day he was discharged from the hospital completely healthy.

Is rock music connected with diabolical power?

I believe that rock music is satanic. In this music one senses an echo of satanic orgies, and very often it draws its fans into alcohol and drug addiction.

Rock music leads to disorders of the human nervous system. People say that they go to discos in order to relax. But I advise them to go

to church to calm their nerves. Let them sing there together with others, take part in the divine services, confess, and receive the Eucharistic Jesus. In this way inner peace and calm will gradually return to them. Even if distractions arise during prayer, let them ask Jesus Christ as Peter did when he began to sink: "Lord, save me!" And the Lord will not delay in stretching out His hand to help them, as He helped Peter, saving him from the stormy waves.

People must never place excessive trust in themselves. Peter assured Christ that he was ready to suffer for Him, even to die. And what happened? Peter denied Him three times. Had he asked Jesus for help, perhaps this would not have happened; but instead he relied on himself with self-confidence.

I often say that people should not rely on their own strength, for by their own strength they can only commit sin. Therefore they must constantly ask the Lord God for help. They watch various immoral films, action movies and horror films, read evil books, and then when they come to church they can no longer pray, because the devil has already planted some sinful thought in them. Often people themselves are to blame for the distractions they experience during the Divine Liturgy. One of the commandments of the Church forbids the reading of evil books. To this one must add that it is also forbidden to watch evil films and corrupt television programs.

In many television programs and films there is cunningly inserted the so-called twenty-fifth frame, which only the subconscious can

perceive. This is a diabolical means of leading people onto a false path—that is, toward sin and away from God. Even during prayer this twenty-fifth frame comes to people's minds in the form of temptation. I read very well about the harmfulness of television in an article by Archimandrite Raphael, published in the journal *Missionary* (no. 10, 2002).

People often ask whether one may inquire about one's future from clairvoyants and fortune-tellers. What do you think about this?

People always wish to know their future, and therefore they often turn for help to fortune-tellers, who are servants of the devil. They learn these things not from God, to whom alone the true future of people is known, but from the evil spirit, who knows something of their past and even of their future.

By God's will, a person is meant to have a good and happy future, but the Lord has concealed from each of us what our path to happiness will be. Many people would like to avoid suffering and incurable illnesses, and for this reason they turn to various fortune-tellers or clairvoyants, hoping that they will help them. But by such actions they do not make their path easier; on the contrary, they make it worse, because they step onto a forbidden path that leads not to happiness, but to destruction.

No one should inquire about his fate through cards, crystal balls, palms, or the like. People should place their present destiny into

God's hands and completely entrust their future to Divine Providence, fulfilling His will and remaining at peace, knowing that they are walking on the right path.

To go to fortune-tellers and inquire about what awaits us is a sin. Holy Church forbids all forms of divination, including card reading. From fortune-telling by cards a person learns nothing, because it is the devil who cunningly acts so as to draw the person away from God. In confession I tell a person who practices card divination first to burn the cards, and only then to come and confess.

One must trust God, not the devil. If a person is experiencing some sorrow, let him place his hope in God and ask His blessing. In the Holy Gospel it is said: "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other" (cf. Luke 16:13).

Astrologers assure people that a person's fate depends on the movement of the planets, the arrangement of the stars, and the like. In horoscopes they predict a person's future for the next day, week, or year. Yet God created man, gave him reason and free will; therefore, man himself shapes his destiny, and no natural phenomena are capable of determining his future.

However, it is claimed that the predictions of soothsayers in most cases come true. Is this true?

Yes, and this can be explained by the fact that the devil has not ceased to be a spirit who nevertheless knows more than man. He cunningly uses this knowledge to deceive a person and, together with some element of truth, to present him with falsehood. The devil does this through his servants—fortune-tellers, sorcerers, and the like.

In the Acts of the Apostles mention is made of the sorcerer Simon, who "used sorcery and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that he himself was some great one," and of the maid who "had a spirit of divination, and brought her masters much gain by soothsaying." Yet all of this they did by the power of the devil, for when the demon was cast out of them, they no longer possessed those abilities.

What do you think about hypnosis?

Some people who possess strong personal energy can influence others, that is, hypnotize them. However, no one has the right to interfere with another person's subconscious, that is, to hypnotize someone; likewise, one must not knowingly submit oneself to hypnosis.

In a state of hypnosis, a person is subject to the one who has hypnotized him, and then his mind and will can easily be

controlled. Holy Church firmly condemns hypnosis and considers it a sin. There also exist various forms of "coding" a person, which are carried out with the help of evil spirits. Only exorcists can remove such codings by the power of God.

Why must one not engage in spiritism?

Spiritism consists in summoning evil spirits and the souls of deceased sinners condemned to eternal punishment, who are under the power of the devil. Spiritism is usually practiced by people who, out of unhealthy curiosity, wish to obtain answers to questions about their future.

This summoning is similar to, yet fundamentally opposed to, the Christian practice of communion with the other world through prayer, by which a person communicates with God, as well as with the saints or with souls suffering in purgatory. Such communication with the other world is mentioned by Jesus Christ in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (cf. Luke 16:19–31).

During spiritist séances one may hear various knockings and see objects move. Often spiritists, having summoned a soul from hell or an evil spirit, are then unable to get rid of them. As a result, such people develop insomnia, fear, and may even experience manifestations of madness and the like. Not infrequently, participation in these séances undermines the health of a person's soul and body, because he falls under the influence of the devil.

Holy Church forbids the faithful to engage in spiritism, considering it a grave sin against the First Commandment of God. This practice was, in fact, already forbidden in the Old Testament, when the Lord addressed His chosen people through His prophet with these words: "Neither let there be found among you any one that consulteth ghosts... or seeketh the truth from the dead. For the Lord abhorreth all these things" (Deuteronomy 18:11–12).

People who engage in spiritism are deceived by the evil spirit, because at times he does speak the truth. Proof of this can be found in the Gospel according to Saint Mark (cf. 3:11–12), where demons revealed the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus did not deny this, but He forbade them to speak of it. Nevertheless, in most cases the devil is a liar, "the father of lies," yet adherents of spiritism accept everything they learn from him as truth.

Christians must not seek the services of spiritists, for by doing so they weaken their faith in the one true God and become victims of the devil. That we should not trifle with the devil and his cunning followers, nor expose ourselves to danger, is also warned by our Divine Savior: "Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Chapter Six

Means of Healing of Soul and Body
(Counsels of Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi)

"When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer reached You"

(Jonah 2:8).

The Holy Mysteries of Penance and the Most Holy Eucharist

Over several decades of my priestly ministry, I have become convinced that very often the evil spirit gains power over people through a bad confession. At times people are ashamed to confess that they lived a sexual life before marriage, conceal sins such as relations with animals, abortions, and the like. For this reason, I always emphasize that people must not conceal sins in confession, because such confessions are sacrilegious. In such a confession a person does not reconcile with God but rather insults Him, because he attempts to deceive Him. A human being may be deceived, but God cannot.

People go to various fortune-tellers, extrasensory healers, and visit all kinds of sects. As a result, the devil increasingly gains power over them; fear arises in them, followed by an aversion to going to church and receiving the Holy Mysteries. The greatest protection against the influence of the devil is holy Confession and holy Communion.

The Novena

One of my close relatives fell ill with cancer and suffered very severe pain. The doctors told him that he would live no more than half a year. I then advised him, over the course of nine first Saturdays of each month, to go to confession, receive holy Communion, read about the life of the Mother of God, and pray the Rosary for his healing. And a miracle occurred. He was completely healed and now gives thanks to God for this miraculous healing, as Saint Apostle Paul exhorted the faithful: "Give thanks in all things; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus toward you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

I have told many people about this miracle that occurred in my family. To all who suffer some misfortune or sorrow, I advise them to do the same on each first Saturday for nine consecutive months. Why nine? Because the nine angelic choirs continually glorify God. Just as on the first Friday of each month we honor the Most Sacred Heart of Christ, asking Jesus Christ for health, so on the first Saturday of the month we sincerely implore the intercession of the Mother of God and believe that our Heavenly Mother will help us, because, as we sing in the hymn, "it has never been heard that she failed to help."

The mother of one priest was gravely ill with cancer. The doctors said that she would die within two or three months. I advised her to pray this novena. And a miracle occurred. She recovered, and

afterward she told me that she was already praying the tenth novena in thanksgiving to God for her healing.

To one woman I advised praying the novena so that her husband would stop drinking and return to her, because he had gone to live with another woman. And it happened that while she was still praying the novena, her husband returned to her and no longer drinks.

There have been many such miraculous healings and conversions. Therefore, I advise people to pray to the Mother of God and to ask her help through this novena. Truly, numerous miracles occur through the intercession of the Most Pure Virgin Mary.

However, if someone has begun to pray the novena, he must, for the entire nine months, go to holy Confession and receive holy Communion. If a person misses, for example, the first Saturday of the eighth month, he must begin the novena again, because his intention has remained unfulfilled. Nevertheless, an unfinished novena has not been in vain, for through those prayers the person has glorified the Lord God.

And if someone is healed, let him give thanks to God for it. Jesus Christ healed ten lepers, and only one returned to give Him thanks (cf. Luke 17:11–19). Therefore, let no one resemble the nine ungrateful lepers.

If God bestows His grace and a person is healed during the praying of the novena, I advise completing it nonetheless, and in this way giving thanks to God for one's healing.

Anointing and Rubbing with Holy Water and Oil

I always advise people to massage the afflicted parts of the body with holy water or oil. And it may happen that the Lord will work a miracle: "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (cf. Mark 10:27).

Before the massage, let the person pray three times the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary*, and then massage the painful areas, such as the hands, legs, abdomen, throat, and so forth. And the person who is being massaged should likewise pray and ask God for healing. Thus, common prayer will bring help. Jesus Christ said: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

To the gravely ill, the dying, and the unconscious, the priest administers the holy Mystery of Anointing with Oil, through which not only are the sick person's sins forgiven, but relief is granted and very often even healing: "Is any sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14).

Pilgrimage

In Christianity, pilgrimage on foot to places of indulgence has long been highly esteemed, where the Lord worked numerous miracles, strengthening the faith of the people. These places became renowned for their annual pilgrimages attended by great multitudes. In Ukraine there are many such places, among them the well-known Krekhiv, Hoshiv, Zarvanytsia, Univ, Pochaiv, and others.

Even in the Old Testament, pilgrimages were practiced among the Jews. In the Gospel according to Saint Luke it is mentioned that the Most Holy Mother of God and Saint Joseph went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where the one and only temple for the entire people of Israel was located (Luke 2:41). In the Acts of the Apostles there is also mention of a pilgrimage to a holy place by a Jew from the diaspora (Acts 8:27).

Pilgrimage is a form of penance imposed upon a person by a spiritual father. As a rule, it consists of a journey on foot to a place of indulgence or a monastery, participation in the Divine Liturgy, and the reception of the holy Mysteries of Penance and the Most Holy Eucharist. The pilgrim, regardless of heat, rain, or wind, does not complain during the pilgrimage and does not seek comfort. Such a pilgrimage usually lifts the burden from a person's soul and strengthens him in faith.

I always encourage the faithful to take part in such pilgrimages. If a person walks on foot, God will count every step, and through fatigue the person atones for the consequences of his sins or may offer it for the shortening of the temporal punishments of the souls in purgatory. Through pilgrimage, his purgatory will at least in part be reckoned to him already here on earth.

Chapter 7
Testimonies of the Healed

"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes"

(Psalm 118:23).

We present several testimonies concerning the healing of the sick, which Almighty God accomplished through the intercession of the Mother of God, all the angels and saints, and through the prayers of Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi. We await your responses and new testimonies of healing, which we shall publish in the second edition.

Fr. Ihor Lazorko (village of Veryn, Mykolaiv District, Lviv region).

Three years ago I was given a terrifying diagnosis: large-cell high-grade non-Hodgkin lymphoma of the throat (a severe form of

cancer). Two years of intensive treatment in an oncology hospital brought no results. Surgical intervention at the medical institute only worsened my condition. I underwent six courses of chemotherapy and twenty-eight sessions of radiation therapy, but nothing helped. One elderly physician said that with such an illness only God could help.

After prolonged prayers over me, Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi administered to me the holy Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Soon thereafter the malignant tumor disappeared, and the doctors were greatly astonished, asking me by what means I had been treated.

I am immeasurably grateful for my healing from this severe and incurable illness to the Lord God, the Mother of God, and the heavenly intercessors for their protection, and also to Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi for his fervent prayers.

Fr. Oleksandr, pastor of the Church of St. Michael (Mukachevo).

Through the intercession of Blessed Hieromartyr Mykola Charnetskyi and through the prayers of Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi, the Lord God healed me of a terrible illness—prostatitis and cystitis.

Yevheniia Khrushch, born 1936 (Lviv).

I suffered three heart attacks and underwent nine different surgeries. The doctors gave me no hope of recovery. Everyone knew that my days were numbered. This illness was a great burden upon my soul. One day a saving thought came to me: that if I could see Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi, I would fall at his feet, as Mary Magdalene once fell at the feet of Jesus Christ. And so it happened. The priest heard my confession, and for five days thereafter I received Holy Communion. Through the Holy Mysteries and the prayers of Fr. Vasyl, I became healthy. Years have passed, and to this day I can hardly believe that I was once so ill and that my life hung by a thread.

Natalia Tserlekevych, born 1983, student of the Ukrainian Catholic University and the Lviv Academy of Arts.

Several years ago doctors gave me a dreadful diagnosis: viral meningoencephalitis (damage to the brain) as a complication after influenza. For five days I was unconscious, during which the functions of vital organs were disrupted and adverse changes occurred in the nervous system. Doctors said that even if I were to regain consciousness, I would be mentally ill.

Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi read prayers for healing and an exorcism over me, as a result of which I completely recovered. Now I paint and write poetry.

Olena Alokhina, born 1958 (Lviv).

For a long time my legs were in pain; doctors said that surgery on my veins was necessary, but I did not consent to surgical intervention. With great faith in God's help, I repeatedly attended prayers with Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi at the Church of St. Michael in Lviv, and soon I became healthy.

Svitlana Velychko, born 1971 (Vynnyky near Lviv).

When I was nine years old, an operation on my tonsils was performed unsuccessfully, and a nerve was carelessly damaged. From that time I developed epilepsy. During frequent seizures, which lasted up to three hours, I lost consciousness. For eighteen years I was treated at a neurological dispensary, after which I was assigned a second-degree disability. At the same time I firmly believed that through the prayers of Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi I would be healed—and so it happened. For my healing from this long-standing illness I sincerely thank God and His faithful servant Fr. Vasyl, who prayed over me many times with heartfelt devotion.

Vira Chyzh, Candidate of Medical Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Family Medicine, Lviv State University named after Danylo Halytskyi.

Divine Providence brought me together with Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi when he himself was undergoing treatment at the emergency hospital in Lviv. This was a very dramatic period for my family: my husband became gravely ill, and doctors said he would live no more

than three weeks. Through the prayers of Fr. Vasyl, my husband lived for more than a year longer.

Natalia Shumska, born 1980, student of the Lviv Academy of Trade and Economics.

I became gravely ill. For a month my entire body hurt so severely that I could not rise from bed. Doctors were unable to establish a diagnosis. After Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi prayed over me, heard my confession, and gave me Holy Communion, I felt relief, and within a few days I was completely restored to health.

Afterword

We thank God that this small book has seen the light of day on the eve of the jubilee of the 45th anniversary of the priesthood and the 75th anniversary of the life of Fr. Vasyl Volodymyr Voronovskyi of the Studite Rule. May it contribute to the glory of God throughout the world and to the spiritual growth of His children in Ukraine and beyond.

We express our sincere gratitude to all who, through prayer or material support, contributed to the publication of this book, in particular to the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Ukraine, Mr. Volodymyr Kozhan, who sponsored its publication, and to Ms. Olha Hosh for her assistance in gathering the materials.

We also express our heartfelt thanks in advance to all who will assist in the distribution of this book, so that it may reach the hands of a great number of the faithful and encourage many not to seek the services of self-proclaimed psychics, healers, and clairvoyants, but rather to turn to the Lord and to His faithful servants in our Holy Church.

Let us pray to Almighty God that He may strengthen those among us who are weak in faith, establish those who are infirm in spirit, convert the lost, and not turn away from anyone who comes to Him, invoking His holy name.

Photos of Father Vasyl Voronovskyi

що їм екстрасенси чи ворожбити допоможуть оздоровитися. А це зовсім не так. Прикладом цього може бути такий випадок.

Зі мною працювала в санепідемстанції одна жінка. До її сусідки, яка не могла ходити, приїхав якийсь екстрасенс з Києва, який дійсно зробив "чудо": жінка два тижні ходила, навіть без костура. Однак після того "лікування" вона навіть з ліжка не могла піднятися. Диявол зробить якесь чудо на тиждень, хай навіть і на місяць, щоб заманити людину. Але пізніше ця людина захворює на ще гіршу недугу.

Св. Церква забороняє вірним ходити до всіляких екстрасенсів і ворожбитів. Ще в Старому Завіті Бог через пророка Ісаю об'явив Своєму народові: "Я обертаю на ніщо знаки віщунів, ворожбитів збиваю з пантелику" (Іс 44, 25).

Кажуть, що екстрасенси, які є звичайними мирянами, а деякі з них навіть нехристиянами, посвячують воду. Чи Ви чули про таке явище?

Так, я чув про це, однак, я завжди кажу вірним, що на таку воду не зійшла Божа благодать, гірше того, вона стає знаряддям диявола. Я раджу людям не користуватися водою, яку посвячував не священик, бо вона принесе їм тільки шкідливі наслідки.

Знаємо таких цілителів, які моляться, мають в хаті ікони, скеровують людей до сповіді, навіть грошей не беруть за свої послуги, а все ж таки викликають підозру своїми діями. Що Ви про це думаєте?

Декотрим священикам, богопосвяченим особам і також мирянам Господь дає ласку зцілювати хворих. Однак усі вони повинні виконувати слова Ісуса Христа, Який сказав, що все, що даром отримали, слід даром і віддавати. Коли людина зловживає Божими дарами, то Господь від неї відбирає їх. І тоді дуже часто декотрі люди переходять з рядів Божих посередників у ряди

Я між людьми, о Господи, буду Тебе хвалити і між народами буду Тобі співати (Пс 57, 10).

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[1] Kseniya Voronovska — the mother of Fr. Vasyl and Bishop Julian. **[2]** Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi together with his mother in Truskavets (1966). **[3]** Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi's biological brother Mykhailo among students of an evening school in Lviv. **[4]** Vasyl Voronovskyi together with his mother at the wedding of his cousin Yaroslav Nakonechnyi (the son of his mother's brother) in the village of Humnyska (1950).

[5] The bell tower in the village of Humnyska — the ancestral village of Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi. **[6]** Fr. Vasyl with his biological brother, Kyryiarch Julian, among priests in front of the Church of the Most Holy Trinity in Drohobych on the day of the conclusion of missions in preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000 (1999). **[7]** The Chapel of the Transfiguration of the Lord in the village of Humnyska — the ancestral village of Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi. **[8]** Studite Hieromonk Vasyl with his biological brother Kyryiarch Julian, Archimandrite of the Studite Rule in Ukraine (Drohobych, 1996). **[9]** The chapel and bell tower built with donations on the site of the parental home in the village of Humnyska, the ancestral village of the Voronovskyi hieromonks — Fr. Vasyl and Bishop Julian. **[10]** Vasyl Voronovskyi near the Chapel of the Transfiguration of the Lord in the village of Humnyska (spring 2003). **[11]** Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi, on the first Sunday of Great Lent, performing the blessing of water over the spring at the site called "Dzhublyk," village of Vilkhivka, Transcarpathia (March 2003).

слуг диявола, починаючи займатися "білою" або "чорною" магією.

Представники "білої" магії часто самі не підозрюють, що опинилися під владою диявола. Вони продовжують молитися, радять хворим ходити до церкви і часто приймати Святі Тайни, але вони починають використовувати різні магічні методи (наприклад, зливання воску, знімання вроків за допомогою сірників тощо), тобто пов'язують молитву з різними дохристиянськими (поганськими) звичаями і забобонами.

Дуже часто представники "білої" магії навіюють людям страх, говорячи про те, що їм "пороблено", призводячи таким чином до взаємної ворожнечі сусідів та родичів. Чим більше людина вірить у те, що їй "пороблено", тим їй дійсно можуть поробити. Людина, яка живе у Божій благодаті, не повинна мати страху перед тим, що їй хтось щось "поробить" чи її "зачарує".

Чим відрізняється "чорна" магія від "білої"?

Представники "чорної" магії, як я вже сказав, завжди прагнуть нашкодити людині, на відміну від представників "білої" магії, які бажають їй допомогти, але результат їхніх дій також шкідливий для неї. Однак як у "чорній", так і у "білій" магіях виконуються різні магічні дії, які відбуваються за допомогою злого духа.

"Чорна" магія – це пряме служіння дияволові, яке звичайно навіює страх перед невдачами, нещастями, різноманітними труднощами і негараздами, викликає надто велике зацікавлення майбутнім, бажання знати речі, які Бог приховав задля добра людини, бажання влади, прагнення успіху, слави, багатства за будь-яку ціну (наприклад, біди чи навіть життя інших людей).

До представників "чорної" магії належать люди, які займаються ворожбитством, астрологією, хіромантією, спіритизмом, гіпнозом, сатанізмом тощо. Вони

Велика бо, як небо, Твоя ласка, і аж до хмар сягає Твоя вірність (Пс 57, 11).

[12] Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi among the people after the blessing of water in the center of the city of Lviv (2000). People always crowd and press around him, just as they once did around Jesus (cf. Luke 8:45).
[13] Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi near the statue of the Mother of God in the Marian chapel in his ancestral village of Humnyska (spring 2003). [14] Fr. Vasyl Voronovskyi after the blessing of the statue of the Most Holy Mother of God at the site called "Dzhublyk," village of Vilkhivka, Transcarpathia, on the first Sunday of Great Lent (March 2003).

Deeply faithful people, even in the most difficult moments of their lives, place their trust in God. In the Holy Gospel we read of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, who came to Jesus at a moment of great distress, when his daughter was dying, and begged Him to save the child. Our Divine Savior said to him: "Do not be afraid; only believe," and He raised the girl to life before the eyes of her parents.

So too I would wish that people, in their illnesses and anxieties, would come to the Lord with the same strong faith. Without true faith in the heart, it is impossible to receive healing of soul and body. And although the devil is stronger than us human beings, Christians who deeply believe in God and recognize His omnipotence have no reason to fear him, for they are armed with the means of grace that the Holy Church gives them as protection against diabolical power.

A believing person should fear only God—or, more precisely, sin, through which one can lose the right to heaven, that is, the inheritance of the children of God. One should not fear illness, poverty, or even death itself, but should look upon everything with the eyes of faith, seeing in all these things instruments in the hands of a good Father, who desires to lead all His wandering children back onto the path of salvation.

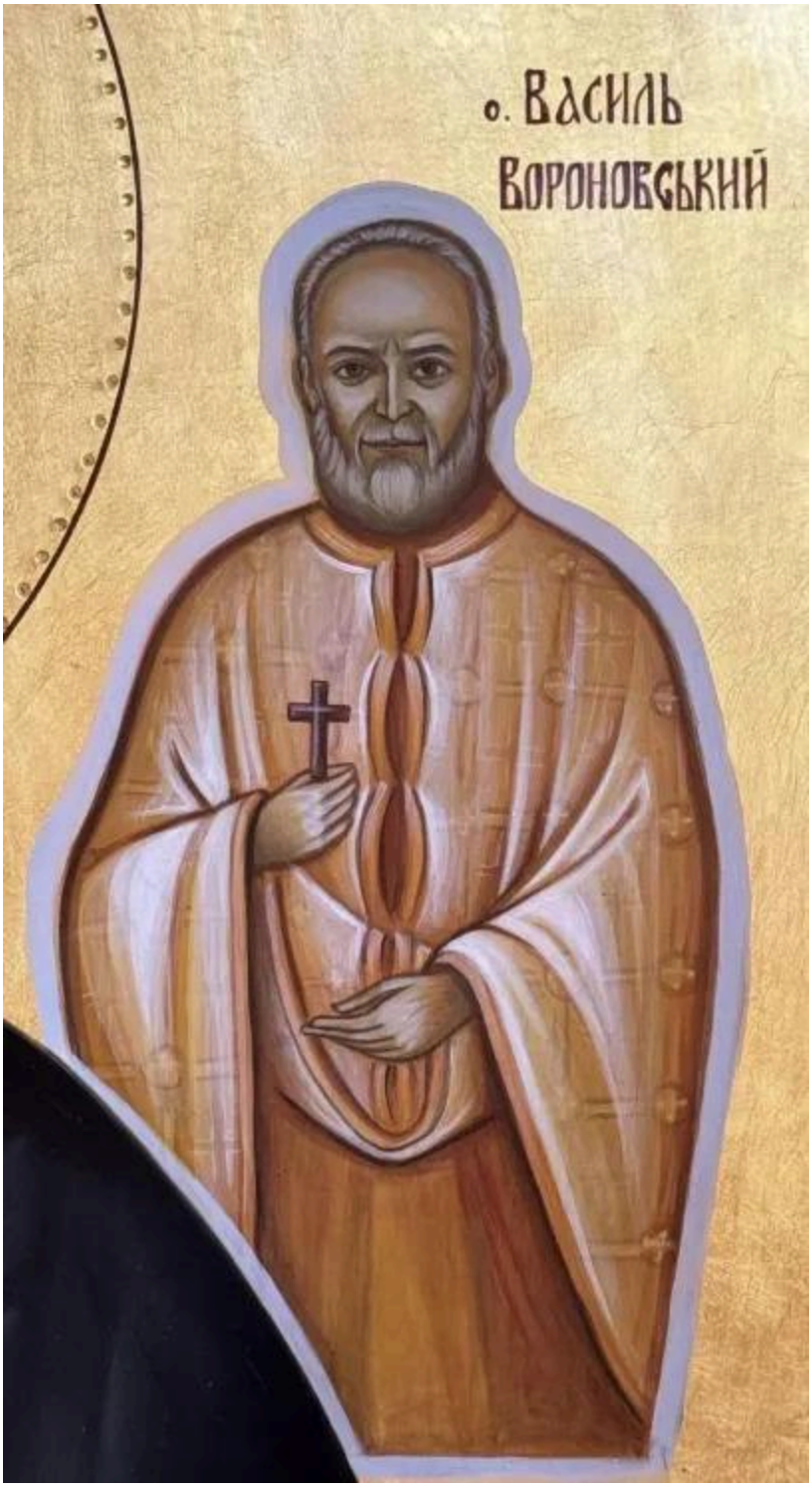
May God grant that all who read this little book be strengthened in true faith in the Triune God, and that those who have gone astray and found deceptive refuge in various sects may return to the bosom of the Holy Church.

- **Hieromonk Vasyl Volodymyr Voronovskyi**
  of the Studites

A Final Word for The God Fearing People of Busk, Lviv

A special and heartfelt thanks is owed to the good people of Busk! If you have made it this far into the collection, I humbly ask that you offer a prayer for these kind people (perhaps even to Fr. Vasyl Voronovsky). Well over half of the materials were provided through their kindness and their love for their "fellow countryman" Fr. Vasyl. When I reached out for their archives, I was met with great kindness, patience, and goodwill. Despite technological and circumstantial difficulties they delivered quickly! They went so far as to scan the book from scratch for all of us.

May God bless them abundantly, and may the prayers of those who benefit from this work return to them a hundredfold. Please all of you, offer a prayer for the repose of Bohdan Lytvyn. He was "the first programmer of Busk and Lviv." This man scanned and uploaded "НЕ БІЙСЯ, ТІЛЬКИ ВІР/Do Not Be Afraid, Only Believe." I spoke to his sister, Maria, who was crucial in supplying these materials.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Вороновський